

EVERYDAY LIFE

DESCRIBING YOUR AREA/ NEIGHBOURHOOD

TEACHER'S NOTES

Age: Adult

Level: Intermediate+

Time: 60 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. practise identifying key information in a text;
2. learn new vocabulary for describing past habits;
3. describe changes to an area they live in (or know well).

Language focus: Vocabulary for describing past habits, changes over time, using time markers.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; audio; optional vocabulary activity.

Exercise 1

This activity orientates learners to the topic and activates prior knowledge. Students discuss the questions in pairs. Don't correct any errors at this stage – don't expect learners to use correct forms for past habits or changes over time.

Optional vocabulary task: at this stage you may wish to pre-teach some vocabulary from the text. An optional vocabulary matching task has been provided below.

Vocabulary

Match the words or phrases with their correct meaning.

1. commute	a) no longer have or use something as it's not useful or needed
2. congestion charge	b) make someone not want to do something
3. put (someone) off (something)	c) a payment you make each day so you can drive in and out of a city centre
4. a death-trap	d) transport that travels above or on the ground, not underground in a tunnel
5. get rid of (something)	e) travel regularly to and from work
6. overground (train)	f) referring to cars, bikes, buses, boats, etc
7. transport-wise	g) a place or vehicle that is in such bad condition that it is dangerous to people

Key

1c 2c 3b 4g 5a 6d 7f

Exercise 2

a. This exercise provides a model for the final task, where learners describe how their town/city has changed. Ask learners to listen for the main information in the text.

Key

1. Where does Dan live at the moment? **London, outside the city centre.**
2. What changes to the city does Dan describe? **Dan mentions changes related to transport. He mentions improvements for cyclists, improvements to the train network, and changes to Heathrow airport. (Students don't need further details at this stage)**
3. Does Dan think these changes are beneficial for the city? **Students own answers. Dan feels the changes to the roads are beneficial from a cyclist perspective. He is also pleased that there are no bendy buses now ('thankfully'). He is unsure about the benefits of the new terminal at Heathrow.**

b. Ask learners to listen again and make more detailed notes related to each topic.

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Possible answers:

Information about Dan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lived in London since mid-2000s first lived in London as a student now lives outside the centre, commutes to centre for work (inferred) a cyclist
Changes to the roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more cycle lanes generally safer Changes maybe due to the congestion charge – less drivers in centre No more bendy buses
Changes to the train network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved still delays and cancellations new lines around the docklands overground trains have improved
Other changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new terminal at Heathrow more tourists coming to the city

c. Ask learners to practise identifying key information from the text based on time markers and tense. Learners can work alone but pairwork might help for support. First, encourage learners to underline the key information, or use the notes from 3b to help them. Next, they add each change described by the speaker in order on the handout.

Note: this activity should highlight to the learners that the use of past time markers could be general or specific. There are some changes or events which they will find hard to add to the timeline as they are too general. Prompt learners to discuss why it was difficult to add these changes, rather than telling them directly.

Key

Possible timeline (answers may vary):

(Early-2000s: Dan moved to London.)

- 'since Dan has lived in London': the train network has improved
- 'about 20 years ago': bendy buses in London
- 'in the mid-2000s': a new train line built in the docklands area
- 'since mid-2000s': improved the overground train network
- 'about 2007, 2008': Eurostar moved from Waterloo to St. Pancras.
- 'about 10 years ago': they got rid of bendy buses in London

The order of the following items may vary – all are in and around 'now'

- 'in recent years': getting around the city has become easier (especially for cyclists)
- 'still': train delays and cancellations
- 'these days': more cycle lanes; safer for cyclists

This general time marker is difficult to add to the timeline:

- 'a while back' = a new terminal built at Heathrow.

You may wish to share further examples of more general past time markers with your learners. Examples include: *a while ago, years ago, ages ago*

Optional: If you did not pre-teach possible unknown vocabulary from the text, you could clarify this with learners at this stage.

Exercise 3

a. In this exercise learners focus on some useful language in the text which will help them complete the task. Ask learners to add the phrases from the box to the table.

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Changes over time	Past habits	Time markers (past and present)
<p>The city's changed quite a lot... <i>guess the biggest changes I've noticed have been...</i> <i>Getting around the city has become a lot easier...</i> <i>the train network has improved a lot...</i> <i>some things haven't changed ...there are more (lines) now than in the past</i> <i>there have been other improvements...</i></p>	<p>The city didn't use to be very cycle-friendly <i>there used to be (these terrible buses in London)</i> <i>the Eurostar trains used to leave from Waterloo.</i> <i>...it used to get so crowded there.</i></p>	<p>Now... Back then... these days <i>...about 20 years ago</i> <i>...about 10 years ago</i> <i>...since I first moved to London</i> <i>there are still...</i> <i>...in the past</i> <i>...in the mid/early-2000s</i> <i>...in about 2007</i> <i>...in recent years</i></p>

b. Ask learners to look through the transcript to find any further phrases they could add to the table. Possible answers shown in the table in italics.

NOTE: You may wish to focus on the forms of some phrases. For example, you could draw attention to the use of comparative forms, present perfect to describe change over time, *used vs didn't use to*, or the use of general time markers (in the past) compared to more specific time markers (since). This is at the teacher's discretion – you may find that an explicit focus on these structures is not needed in order to complete the task. At this levels, learners may be familiar with the rules for each structure but may benefit from more chances to use the language freely.

c. This draws learners' attention to two other useful phrases. They discuss the meaning of the phrases in bold. You should clarify:

This is partly **due to** the congestion charge

'due to' introduces the cause. The effect, which is fewer cars on the road, is referred to as 'This'. You can highlight this to learners in the transcript.

Fewer cars **mean** more space for bikes, so I'm not complaining!

'mean' introduces the effect. The information coming before 'means' is the cause.

d. Students have a brief chance to structure one sentence/ paragraph describing change over time. This includes using a structure to describe a past habit, time markers, and a chance to mention cause/effect. A structure is provided for support, but you could instruct learners to write this freely on the back of the paper or in their notebooks. This is a small bit of scaffolding before the final task, to check learners understand some more difficult parts of the target language.

Key

Possible answer

In my part of town there didn't use to be many high-rise buildings. These days, there are far more condominiums and high-rise office blocks. This is due to the government's decision to build new metro stations in the area. More people are choosing to live outside the centre in my part of town as it's become more convenient.

Students share their ideas with a partner, who can peer correct if needed.

Exercise 4

a. This is a chance for students to describe changes to their own town over time. The task is left free enough for learners to decide which changes they would like to mention. Some topics have been suggested if needed.

Make sure students only make notes on the changes they wish to mention. They shouldn't write in full sentences. Learners share their description with a partner, who listens and asks follow-up questions where appropriate.

If you would like students to focus on the language used by their partner, you could use the box in 3a as a checklist – they tick any phrases they hear their partner use.

b. To close the task, students discuss the questions.

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TRANSCRIPT

I've lived in London since the early-2000s. I first lived there as a student. Back then I lived in the city centre in student accommodation, but now I live outside the centre and commute to work.

The city's changed quite a lot since I first moved there. I guess the biggest changes I've noticed have been to the transport network.

You know, about 20 years ago there used to be these terrible buses in London called 'bendy buses'. They were basically two long buses attached to each other, which would bend around corners. They were awful. A death-trap, and a nightmare for cyclists! Thankfully they got rid of them about 10 years ago.

What else? Hmm... well, the train network has improved a lot since I first moved to London. I mean, some things haven't changed, there are still lots of delays and cancellations! Mind you, there are more lines now than in the past. Back in the mid-2000s they built a new line around the docklands area, and they've improved the overground network since then too. Oh, and there's the Eurostar! That moved to St Pancras station in about 2007, 2008, something like that. The Eurostar trains used to leave from Waterloo in the south, which was my local station. Urrgh, it used to get so crowded there, but it's much better now.

I guess there have been other improvements transport-wise too. I remember they built a new terminal at Heathrow airport a while back. I don't really know what impact that change has had to be honest, but I imagine it's helped bring more tourists to the city. I don't really know, but I remember it being all over the news at one point.

Something else I've noticed is that getting around the city has become a lot easier in recent years, especially if you're a cyclist like me. The city didn't use to be very cycle-friendly, but these days there are a lot more cycle lanes and it's generally safer for cyclists. This is partly due to the congestion charge. It costs quite a lot to drive in London, which puts a lot of drivers off I think. Fewer cars mean more space for bikes, so I'm not complaining!

So anyway, yeah, they're some of the big changes I can think of.